

Amersham Gardening Association

www.amersham-gardening.org.uk

February 2024 Newsletter

From the Treasurer

The accounts for 2023 are on page 10. The summary is that we have some £2000 more in the current account than at the end of 2023. However, this includes advance payments for two outings, to Sarah Nicholson's garden in February and Stubbings House Garden and Nursery on March 20th, by bank transfer, as well as subscriptions banked before the end of December (in previous years cheques for subscriptions have not been banked until late January). Overall, the Association is in a healthy financial state, with some £13,294 in the deposit account (which paid £131 in interest during 2023 – a great improvement over recent years when the account paid negligible interest).

Subscriptions do not cover the cost of speakers and hire of the Drake Hall for our monthly meetings; we plan outings to break even with slightly fewer attendees than the coach will take, so if more people sign up then we make a modest profit on outings. As noted below, the annual plant sale, and the 10% commission on members' plant sales at meetings make a significant contribution, as does the raffle at monthly meetings. Thanks to all who contribute to, and organise, plant sales at meetings, and special thanks to Christine Prizeman and those who help her with the monthly raffles.

Gremlins strike again

Despite our best efforts, and checking by all members of the committee, gremlins struck production of the green programme card for 2024, and the May meeting was missed out. See page 2 for information about this

meeting. If you have received a programme card without the May meeting, please see Annie at an evening meeting, and she will give you a replacement card.

Plant sale, Saturday May 4th, St Michael's Church forecourt

Our annual plant sale is not only a source of income, but more importantly a source of publicity and a means of attracting new members. When you are planting seeds, taking cuttings and splitting perennials, please think about what you could offer for the plant sale – vegetable plants are always popular.

The sale opens to the public at 09:00, but we will need volunteers to help setting up from 08:00, and to sell plants until 12:00, then to help clear up. There will be a list for you to sign up to help for all or part of the morning at meetings in March and April.

Annual General Meeting, March 28th

The Annual General Meeting will be held at 19:45 on March 28th, before the talk by Matt Biggs (see page 2). The minutes of the 2023 AGM are on page 7, and the agenda and honorary officers' reports for the 2024 AGM on pages 8 – 9.

Please consider joining the committee to help running the association.

Nominations for members of the committee, and offers to stand for election should be sent to the Hon Secretary, Jean Bowing (secretary@amersham-gardening.org.uk) by March 1st.

Nominations and offers to join the committee will also be accepted on the evening.

Outings to book now

With this newsletter are booking forms for two outings: Cambridge Botanical Gardens on April 18th,

and Rodmarton House and Gardens on May 7th. See page 3 for details

Forthcoming meetings in the Drake Hall starting at 8:00 pm

February 22nd Colin Roberts. A year in the gardens at Adwell House.



Colin has been head gardener at [Adwell House](#) near Thame for the past 15 years, having moved down from Lincolnshire from his previous head gardener post.

The garden at Adwell extends to about 4 acres where several events and open days are held.

Colin is a member of the Professional Gardeners Guild and was their vice-chairman for the south of England.

March 28th Annual General Meeting and Matthew Biggs: RHS - A Nation in Bloom

[Matthew](#) is a gardener, writer and broadcaster, best known for his appearances in BBC Radio 4's *Gardeners' Question Time*. He has been a TV researcher, presenter and director, has written or contributed to over ten books; his most recent book is [A Nation in Bloom](#), celebrating the people, plants and places of the RHS.

"*A Nation in Bloom* explores the new direction of the RHS, how it aims to inspire us all through plants and gardens, to improve our lives, and to encourage gardeners for generations to come. Illustrated with beautiful photography throughout, this book is the rich, varied and compelling story of how plants and gardens can transform people's lives and help to define the culture of an entire nation, both now and for the future."



Note that the **AGM will start at 7:45**, followed by the talk by Matthew Biggs at 8:00pm.

April 25th Sarah Eldon and Claire Williams. The life of fungi

Claire is a regular contributor of photos to the [Bucks Fungus group](#), so we can expect some stunning photos of fungi that can be found locally.



May 23rd George Lockwood. Climbers in a royal garden – Highgrove

George Lockwood, a fulltime, totally organic passionate gardener who learnt his trade at Capel Manor College and has been a consultant gardener at Highgrove and other large gardens over many years. Highgrove is one

of the best gardens in the south of England and is maintained purely organically. No chemicals are used and the soil is rich in organic matter which provides the ideal growing conditions for all plants.

Outings to book now

See the booking forms with this newsletter. Please note that if you are paying by bank transfer, you **must** use the reference surname-Cam or surname-Rod, so that we know who has paid for which outing.

For both outings, if you cannot print out the booking form, just write to the organizer (Althea or Liz) with the relevant information.

Cambridge Botanic Gardens, Thursday 18th April

Organiser Althea Godfrey 01494 874846. Mobile for use on the day only 07876263592.

Cost £26.00pp. Includes entrance fee, coach fare and driver's tip.

The gardens consist of a Grade II listed heritage landscape with many specimen trees and plants, a lake, a limestone rockery, and a series of herbaceous flower beds, glasshouses, a large cafe and a shop. Plenty of seats are dotted about the gardens for resting and picnics.

More information at <https://www.botanic.cam.ac.uk/>.

A limited number of Mobility Scooters are available free of charge and must be booked in advance. Circle YES, on booking form if required.

Your ticket allows you to come and go; Cambridge city centre is approximately 15 minute walk away with cafes along the route. Or you can bring a picnic

1st pick up. Amersham Rugby Club, Ash Grove, Weedon Lane, Amersham HP6 5QU Coach leaves at 9:15 sharp. Parking cost £4.00 per car. Park in the car park on the **right** at the end of Ash Grove. Please have coins ready to pay.

2nd pick up. The bus stop outside the Lifestyle Centre car park in Amersham HP6 5AH at 9.20am.

Rodmarton Manor House and Garden (Cirencester), Tuesday 7th May

Organiser Liz Moulton 01494 784913. Mobile 07493829930 on the day

Cost £37.00 pp. Includes coach, entry to house and garden, coffee/tea and biscuits and driver's tip.

Rodmarton was featured last year on Gardeners' World and that is what inspired Liz to organise a visit. It is a supreme example of the Cotswold Arts and Crafts Movement. The garden was laid out as the house was being built (1909-1929) as a series of outdoor rooms covering about 8 acres. Each room has a different character and is bounded by walls or hedges. One

garden room has 26 separate beds. The Topiary is a feature of the garden. The herbaceous borders are magnificent in May. There is a walled kitchen garden. We will have a guided tour of the house, with free flow of the garden.

More information at <https://rodmarton-manor.co.uk/>.

There are no lunch facilities at Rodmarton, so please bring a picnic

1st pick up. Amersham Rugby Club, Ash Grove, Weedon Lane, Amersham HP6 5QU Coach leaves at 9.00, sharp. Parking cost £4.00 per car. Park in the car park on the **right** at the end of Ash Grove. Please have coins ready to pay.

2nd pick up. The bus stop outside the Lifestyle Centre car park in Amersham HP6 5AH at 9:10.



11.00 approximate arrival time at Rodmarton.
14.30 Leave Rodmarton for Bampton Garden Centre
16.30 Return to Amersham

Thoughts on poinsettias

Some years ago we stayed at the Gaylord Palms hotel in central Florida over Christmas; it boasts a 4.5 acre indoor garden atrium that is always at 72F (an-ideal comfortable indoor temperature, just over 21C). When we arrived the impressive floral borders were lined with poinsettias; as far as we could tell, they were all exactly the same height, and we had thoughts of contacting a nursery to supply several hundred thousand plants all exactly the same height, and with the same number of inflorescences and scarlet bracts. On December 26th we walked through the atrium en route to breakfast in one of the many indoor / outdoor eateries. To our horror, all the poinsettias had been pulled up overnight, and were being replaced with spring-flowering plants (again, all the same size, etc). We knew that Christmas in USA ends on December 25th and the 26th is a normal working day, but we were still surprised by this garden vandalism.

More recently we were on a Saga cruise over Christmas, and each table in the restaurant had a poinsettia plant; we left the ship on January 5th, and while the Christmas decorations had been removed overnight (sensibly in advance of twelfth night when new passengers would start their post-Christmas cruise), we do not know whether the poinsettias, still in good condition, were retained, or replaced with the more usual gerbera flowers (individual blooms in small vases on each table). However, this got us thinking about how and why poinsettias have replaced our traditional holly with red berries as Christmas decoration. (We have several bird-sown hollies in our garden, but our only female, berrying, plant has interesting yellow berries, not the traditional red).

Poinsettias originated in Mexico, and there is a legend of how and why they are association with Christmas. In the 17th century, a poor Mexican girl, Pepita, could not afford a present to take to the infant Jesus on Christmas Eve, so she picked a bunch of weeds from the roadside and made them into a small bouquet. As she knelt to put the bouquet at the foot of the nativity scene, the weeds burst into bright red flowers; everyone who saw

Dung beetles

We have dung beetles in this country, but most live in dung, rather than rolling balls of it around. A recent paper in Proceedings of the Royal Society (see [The Guardian](#), 17th January 2024) reports the sort of apparently useless, but nice to know, science about the South African spider dung beetle. These beetles roll a ball of animal dung round in pairs, with the male on top dragging and the female underneath, pushing; they appear to have no destination in mind, but just roll the ball of dung around. When they encounter a vertical barrier, such as a tree root, the female does a "headstand" and pushes the ball upwards, so allowing the male to pull it over the obstruction.

them were sure they had seen a miracle. From then, the bright red flowers were known in Mexico as the 'Flores de Noche Buena', or 'Flowers of the Holy Night'.

The poinsettia was introduced to the USA by Joel Roberts [Poinsett](#), the first US Ambassador to Mexico. He was a keen botanist, and had greenhouses on his plantation in South Carolina. In 1828 he sent some plants home from Mexico, where he had them grown on and sent to friends and botanical gardens. At the Philadelphia flower show, Robert Buist, a plantsman saw the flower; he was probably the first person to sell them under their botanical name *Euphorbia pulcherrima* (=most beautiful euphorbia), although by 1836 they were given their common name in honour of Poinsett. At first they were sold as cut flowers, then in the early 1900s they were sold as whole plants for landscaping. Paul Ecke was the first person to develop plants that could be grown in pots indoors. In 1923, he founded the Ecke Ranch, initially in California, and now with growing facilities in Guatemala. It produces around 80% of the 70 million poinsettia plants that are sold in the United States in the weeks leading up to Christmas each year. During the 1960s, Joseph Spray and other nurserymen saw the plants in American catalogues and began bringing them to Britain from the United States, but it was not until the 1980s that they became widespread as Christmas plants in Britain and the rest of Europe.

Mexico is sub-tropical, and there and in other tropical and sub-tropical regions, poinsettias flower and produce red bracts in the wild more or less all year round, because they flower when they have equal daylight and night-time darkness. They can grow to up to a metre or more tall and wide. This means that to have them in flower in December in temperate regions such as the UK, they have to be given appropriate periods of darkness in summer, and artificial light in winter. Keen gardeners will doubtless try to keep this year's poinsettias, hooding them over during part of the day in summer and setting up overhead lighting in winter.

This is lovely observational biology, and raises the question as to how the male, on top, communicates with the female, underneath, who cannot see what is ahead.

I am jealous of people who can indulge in this sort of research that has no apparent usefulness or application, but, like arts and humanities, adds to our general knowledge and therefore the sum of human happiness.

Blurring the boundaries in magazines

Years ago, a colleague had personal subscriptions to both the *Lancet* and the *British Medical Journal*. He subscribed to the belief that, like fine wines, journals and magazines should not be opened too young but be left in their (in those days plastic) wrappers to ripen and mature. He would then read a selection, taken more or less at random from the ripening pile, when time allowed. I would then be told when we met that there was an interesting article in this week's *Lancet* (or sometimes *BMJ*). What this meant was that in one or the other of these journals (or sometimes in another journal altogether), there had been an article of interest to me some time in the last six or so months. At least these journals were all medical or biomedical.

Until recently I could comfort myself with the knowledge that the various magazines I subscribe to had content relevant to the society or organisation they came from: *Birds*, the magazine of the RSPB, now renamed *Nature's Home* was about birds; *The Garden* from the RHS was about plants, gardens and gardening; *English Heritage Members'* magazine was about the historic sites maintained by English Heritage; the National Trust magazine was similarly about historic houses (also, of course, including their gardens and grounds) and landscapes; and *Wild, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire* published by the local Wildlife Trust was about wildlife in our region.

Things are no longer so simple. There has been a blurring of boundaries, with gardening making an appearance in most of the magazines, be it the health benefits of gardening and access to green spaces (perhaps much of this is a result of the Covid lock-

downs and increased awareness of the importance of gardens and open spaces), the ecological and biodiversity advantages of "gardening for wildlife" and increased biodiversity, including providing food sources for pollinating insects (despite the small size of many gardens, together our gardens cover a greater area than the country's various nature reserves); or the health benefits (real or perceived) of growing our own food. I no longer scan *BMJ* and the *Lancet*, but I presume that these and other biomedical journals also have articles on the health benefits of gardening; I know that some GP friends "prescribe" gardening to some of their patients.

The health benefits of home grown produce are perhaps controversial; certainly home grown fruit and vegetables are considerably fresher than shop-bought, and may well have a better flavour (because we tend to grow varieties that may have a lower yield, and ripen over a longer period of time than is acceptable to commercial growers, who want (and need) a high yield per hectare, and can harvest crops only once or at most twice from each area – always assuming that they have labour to do the picking. It is debatable whether or not home-grown fruit and vegetables are any cheaper than shop-bought (count in the cost of compost, fertiliser, etc, as well as seeds, although you cannot really include the cost of your time, since it is, after all, a hobby). It is also difficult to know whether home-grown produce is more nutritious than shop-bought; the nutritional value of a fruit varies not only with variety, but also soil, position in the field or orchard, and indeed even on which side of the tree the apple or pear came from.

Two recent articles sparked my interest in this "cross-fertilisation" between different interest groups.

The December 2023 issue of *The Garden* has several pages devoted to the different birds found in gardens through the year, and how to encourage them. OK, birds, as well as butterflies, moths, etc, all add to our enjoyment of our gardens, and as the RSPB magazine has widened its scope from *Birds* to become *Nature's Home*, increasing habitats for birds, and other wildlife in our gardens is obviously part of its remit.

The winter 2023 issue of *Wild BBO* has an article on saving water in the garden, including installing water butts and using grey water from showers, baths and washing up. This is not as easy as it might appear. In our previous home, the washing machine drained through the wall in a small utility room that was an afterthought, through a pipe a couple of feet above ground level, into an open drain in the garage, so it was quite easy to let the first very soapy batch drain away, then divert the pipe into a 5 gallon container to collect the rinse water and carry it down the garden. In our present house all the plumbing is within the cavity walls, so collecting grey water is not easy. Grey water has to be used relatively soon after collection, since otherwise

the diluted soap and detergents allow bacterial growth and the development of unpleasant odours. I well recall at least two areas in Spain where grey water was being used. One was a garden area around the patio of our hotel room – when the drip feed irrigation was running it was time to leave the patio and shut the door. The other was a fountain in a coastal town where it was unpleasant to be down-wind. Here the need for grey water was less obvious; the fountain was only a few metres from the beach, and presumably sea water could have been used.

The article in *Wild BBO* was entitled *Precious Water*, and since most of our domestic water in the Chilterns comes more or less directly from our endangered chalk streams, it is certainly within the remit of the wildlife trust to encourage water saving. Although I would not wish to revert to what I remember from travelling in France in the 1960s and 1970s, when taps were labelled as "eau non-potable" and "eau potable", there is something inherently wasteful in using highly purified water that is suitable for drinking and cooking, to water gardens and



flush toilets. However, I would not like to have to use bottled water to clean my teeth, or, as travellers need to in some countries, seal their lips with vaseline before showering lest they accidentally swallow water that is not be at all fit to drink. Indeed, it may have come directly from the local river, which is also a running sewer. At least our sewage and farm waste pollution of rivers, despicable though it is, is removed before water enters our drinking supply.

Some years ago I was driving through Spain, and near the village of Arinsal in the Pyrenees I came across a road-side spring. I filled a couple of bottles with the water, to wash the insects from my windscreen. When I came to my hotel on the coast, I discovered that all the water in my room was salt water (a great shock when I made coffee), and I had to go out and buy bottles of water to make coffee (and clean my teeth). The water was bottled in Arinsal.

There is a considerable international trade in water; people in Amersham will apparently cheerfully buy French, Welsh or Scottish bottled water in preference to the readily available water that does not need bottles, because it comes out of the tap – with a considerably lower carbon footprint. Of course, in some areas the tap water is so heavily chlorinated that it is not really fit to drink. The Mole Valley water in Surrey is treated with chloramine rather than simple chlorine, and has a disgusting taste directly from the tap; locals either buy bottled water or keep a filter jug in the fridge.

On a cruise from UK to West Africa I noticed that the bottled water supplied (free of charge) at the gangway for those going ashore, was from Mexico – presumably acting as ballast for otherwise empty shipping containers returning from central America to Europe.

Nothing seems to have come from the idea mooted some years ago to relieve southern California's chronic drought (temporarily relieved at present by the massive floods caused by heavy rains) by towing icebergs from Antarctica to Los Angeles. However, Arctic icebergs have been harvested as they calve off the Greenland ice shelf and float down to Newfoundland and Labrador in Canada, then the resultant melt water is stored and used in the manufacture of high quality vodka, in the same way as highly peated water is used to dilute raw spirit in the manufacture of some of the best whiskies. The iceberg melt water is very pure and reputed to have an excellent flavour. In 2019 one of the weirdest thefts was of some 30,000 litres of such iceberg meltwater from storage containers in Port Union, Newfoundland – a case of bottled iceberg water was apparently worth several hundred dollars. More recently, a Greenland entrepreneur has started to cut glacial ice from the fjords and ship it to Dubai for use in cocktail bars. In a country where almost all drinking water is produced by desalination of sea water, and where alcoholic drinks are only allowed behind closed doors, perhaps the expense, if not the carbon footprint, of importing ice from Greenland is considered to be acceptable.

An audience with the Queen Bee, Meriet Duncan

If you missed Meriet's talk at our November meeting, or would like to have another chance to talk to her, she will be holding "an audience with the Queen Bee" on Friday 19th April, from 13:30 to 16:30 at the Jubilee Hall, Rectory Hill, Amersham, in aid of Scanappeal.

Tickets (to include tea and cakes) £15 from scanappeal.org.uk or 01494 734161

Minutes of the Annual Meeting held on 23rd March 2023

in the Drake Hall, Amersham Community Centre

Present: A total of 87 members and 2 visitors signed the attendance book.

1. Welcome: The Chairman, Colin Ross offered a warm welcome to members and thanked them for attending. He was pleased to see so many supporting the Association. He mentioned the loss of a long-standing member, Neil Young, and said our thoughts are with Paddy.

The plant fair on Saturday April 29th is an important source of revenue for the Association and he hoped members would support it. There are still spaces on the trip to Englefield House and Lower Bowden Manor and anyone interested should speak to Liz Moulton. A chance to visit Orchard House in Coleshill and Stepping Stones are detailed in the Newsletter.

2. Apologies for absence: These had been received from Carol and Gordon Barratt, David Bender and Kenneth Bodman.

3. Minutes of the previous AGM held on 24th March 2022 had been published in the February Newsletter. Acceptance was proposed by Tony Glyn-Jones and seconded by Felicity Vickery and carried nem con.

4. Matters arising: Nothing was raised.

5. Officers' reports: These had been published in the February Newsletter. The Chairman thanked the Officers and Committee for their hard work.

6. Treasurer's report: This had been published in the Newsletter. Nothing was raised on the report. Acceptance was proposed by Tim Hillier and seconded by Ray Edwards, and carried with nem con.

7. President's comments: The President thanked the Committee for their hard work. He felt the Association was running well

8. Election of Officers:

Officers who had declared themselves willing to stand for election were

Hon Chairman	Colin Ross
Hon Secretary	Jean Bowling
Hon Treasurer	David Bender
Hon Membership Secretary:	Vacant
Hon Social Secretary (visits)	Joan Clark *
Hon Social Secretary (talks)	Sue Edwards and Julie Burton
Hon Archivist	Carol Barratt

The vote was carried nem con.

* Although willing to stand at the moment Joan stated that she would like someone to take over from her as soon as possible.

9. Election of Committee members: Frances Billington, Carol Daw, Irene Glyn-Jones, Liz Moulton, Clive Symes and Anne Webb

The vote was carried nem con.

10: Election of independent examiner for the accounts: Mrs Susan Humble is willing to act for another year. The vote was carried nem con.

11. AOB: Nothing was raised

After the AGM we had a talk by Thomas Webb who had stepped in at the last minute after the death of the proposed speaker. Thomas's talk was entitled "Birds in your Garden". He talked initially about the top ten, the variation in their plumage and song adding that bird song is complex. The first bird he mentioned was the house sparrow, 70% have disappeared in the last few years. Along with a picture of the sparrow he played its song, which he described as "can be irritating". The hedge sparrow has a different song from the house sparrow. Thomas went on to show pictures of

many more birds each time accompanied by its song. Starlings have a cheeky song and the song thrush is probably the best singer. The robin is the only bird that sings all year long.

Colin thanked Thomas for his very interesting talk and for stepping in at the last minute.

Annual General Meeting, 28th March 2024

Agenda

- 1) Welcome
- 2) Apologies for absence
- 3) Minutes of the previous AGM held on 24th March 2022.
- 4) Matters arising
- 5) Officers' reports (see below).
- 6) Treasurer's report and annual accounts (see page 10)
- 7) President's comments
- 8) Election of officers. The following have declared themselves willing to stand for election:
 - Hon Chairman: Colin Ross
 - Hon Secretary: Jean Bowling
 - Hon Treasurer: David Bender
 - Hon Membership Secretary: Annie Jardine
 - Hon Social Secretary (visits): Liz Moulton
 - Hon Social Secretary (talks): Sue Edwards and Julie Burton
 - Hon Archivist: Carol Barratt
- 9) Election of committee members. The following have declared themselves willing to stand for re-election:
 - Frances Billington, Joan Clark, Carol Daw, Irene Glyn-Jones, Liz Moulton, Clive Symes, Anne Webb.
- 10) Election of independent examiner for the accounts:

a) To thank Mrs Susan Humble for her diligent examination of the accounts over the last few years, and to note that she will be moving away and unable to act next year.

b) To ask for a volunteer who is willing to undertake the not unduly onerous task of inspecting the accounts in late January / early February.

Honorary officers' reports

Talks secretaries: Sue Edwards and Julie Burton

Although not as difficult as during the COVID period, we are still finding speakers to be an uphill struggle.

In January, we welcomed Jill Eyers who took us to the Amazon on her journeys sourcing plants and seeds which she sent to Kew which was very interesting.

In February, we were visited by Paolo Arrigo - a very charismatic speaker whose topic was 'Italy from seed to plate'. He brought along packets of seeds for sale and explained the use of different varieties of each vegetables.

Our March speaker very sadly died very suddenly but Tom Webb stood in at the last moment and introduced us to the sounds, habits and appearance of our garden birds. A different and thoroughly enjoyable talk.

In April, Timothy Walker, a very enthusiastic and engaging speaker, introduced us to the history and gardens of the Oxford Botanical Gardens. A very well received lecture.

In May John Tyler gave a fascinating talk on the evolution of the Chiltern landscape and its wildlife over the last hundred million years to the present day. A knowledgeable speaker.

Our June speaker unfortunately let us down at the last minute but David saved the day and gave us a most interesting and informative talk on how to manipulate and enhance our photographs of plants and gardens.

Gardening for wildlife is a topical subject and Dr Stephen Head showed us how to provide suitable habitats while maintaining an attractive garden. An interesting speaker for July.

In September Prof Roderick Floud's talk was 'Purchasing Paradise' and explained how owners of historic palaces and homes raised monies to create their wonderful gardens and landscapes.

In November Meriet Duncan gave us a fascinating and very informative talk on honey bees their life and the enormous amount of work these little insects have to undertake to produce one pot of honey. An inspiring and very enthusiastic speaker.

The Christmas Social in December was very well attended, in spite of awful weather, and enjoyed by all. We saw an excellent video by Keith Hoffmeister of the gardening groups holiday in the Isle of Wight in May.

Membership secretary: Annie Jardine

Subscriptions for the year 1st January 2023 to 31st December remained unchanged at £10 single and £17 per couple at the same address. At the 31st December we had a total of 172 members with 20 of those being

new members who joined throughout the year. Please remember that renewal subscriptions fell due on January 1st of this year and remain the same as in the previous year.

Visits secretary: Liz Moulton

We had the following outings in 2023:

- May 6th: evening visit to Stepping Stones in South Heath (when it rained very hard indeed)
- April 20th: visit by coach to Englefield and Lower Bowden Manor
- July 2nd: visit to Forage Farm (this was joining an open day at the farm; it was apparently very disappointing and only two people went)
- July 12th: evening visit to the Harrisons' garden in Amersham
- August 15th: tea party at Little Heath Nursery, Potten End
- September 6th: visit by coach to Kew Gardens (which was one of the hottest days of the year)

Reports of the outings can be found in the newsletters, which are available on our website.

Chairman's report: Colin Ross

I am very pleased to be able to report (once again) that the Amersham Gardening Association had another very successful year! The monthly talks continue to be very well attended – thanks to Sue Edwards and Julie Burton for continuing to find varied and interesting speakers, and for making all the necessary arrangements month by month. The majority of our speakers have been very positive about our facilities and in general they are amazed at the number of members attending the meetings.

Following the return to physical meetings, we held a New Members Meeting in April and this was well supported. It is therefore intended to hold another New Members Meeting this year immediately before the April meeting – members who joined since last April will receive an invitation in the next month.

The trips, both the many day trips and the holiday to the Isle of Wight were very much appreciated, allowing members to visit beautiful gardens and to get to know their fellow members. Thanks to Joan Clark, the visits team and everyone else involved for all their hard work to make the visits possible. Those who attended the Christmas Social enjoyed a very enjoyable slide show of the Isle of Wight holiday and we must all be very grateful for the considerable amount of work by Keith Hoffmeister to make it.

The plant sale was a success and raised a significant amount of money for the Association's funds. It also helps to maintain our standing in Amersham, which in turn helps to bring in new members. There is a lot of work involved in preparing for this sale, so if you think you could help in any way, please let Janet Philpott or any committee member know. As always, a special thanks to Janet for co-ordinating everything.

None of the above would be possible without the hard work of the committee and sub-groups. I therefore ask you again to help them where possible and to suggest ways that the high standards of the Association can be maintained or even improved. Obvious ways of becoming involved are by volunteering to help with the refreshments and offering to join the committee in a specific role or as a general member. I am very much aware of how much easier my job is because of the hard work put in by the members of the committee and their helpers.

It goes without saying that we need new blood in the committee to ensure that it reflects our ever changing membership. If you think you could help in any way please let one of the committee members know.

Amersham Gardening Association
Income and expenditure account
for the year ending 31st December 2023

	2023			2022		
	income	expenditure	balance	income	expenditure	balance
Subscriptions	2197.00		2197.00	1456.00		1456.00
Deposit account interest	131.38		131.38	53.76		53.76
Visitors and miscellaneous	79.00		79.00	676.11		676.11
Plant sales at meetings	100.00		100.00	100.00		100.00
Social activities (incl tea)	0.00	-333.13	-333.13	0.00	-457.66	-457.66
Activities and fundraising						
Outings	34690.70	-33049.45	1641.25	32738.00	-31685.00	1053.00
Raffle and Xmas tombola/raffle	820.70	-379.43	441.27	593.80	-242.40	351.40
Quiz night	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Plant sales outside	1173.95	-407.77	766.18	1460.00	-413.59	1046.41
Other expenditure						
Speaker fees		-976.00	-976.00			
Room hire ACC		-847.20	-847.20		-1242.00	-1242.00
Venue hire (other)		-40.00	-40.00		-865.27	-865.27
Gratuities and gifts		-656.00	-656.00		-45.00	-45.00
Newsletter and postage		-128.31	-128.31		-590.00	-590.00
Administration and publicity		-367.71	-367.71		-113.07	-113.07
Social activities miscellaneous		-333.13	-333.13		-427.99	-427.99
shows					-457.66	-457.66
total	39192.73	-37518.13	1674.60	41023.91	40713.98	309.93

Amersham Gardening Association
Balance sheet as at 31st December 2023

	2023	2022
Current assets		
Cash in hand	£0.00	£0.00
Cash at bank (current account)	£6,039.47	£4,160.62
Cash at bank (savings account)	£13,291.81	£13,163.43
Total	£19,331.28	£17,324.05
Balance brought forward	£17,324.05	£16,968.97
surplus for the year	£2,007.23	£355.08
Balance carried forward	£19,331.28	£17,324.05

Signed

Tim Hillier (President)

dated

David Bender (Treasurer)

dated

12/2/24

Independent Examiner's report

I have examined the above balance sheet and attached income and expenditure account with the books and vouchers, and, in my opinion, they present a fair view of the financial position of the Association as at 31st December 2023

Susan Humble
Hon. Independent Examiner

Susan Humble

dated 11th February 2024

Some requests for help

We always need people to meet and greet members and visitors at our meetings.

If you can help, please contact Felicity Vickery Tel: 01494 726284, email felicityvickery@yahoo.co.uk

We need people to help with the tea and coffee at our meetings. There is a rota so you are not expected to help at every meeting. If you can help, please contact Liz Moulton Tel: 01494 784913, email libbym6740@gmail.com

As ever, it will be much appreciated if some members could arrive about 7 pm to help put out chairs and tables; they do not put themselves out!

Please remember the raffle at each meeting. The profit on the raffles makes a very useful contribution to our expenses; subscriptions alone do not cover the cost of meetings and speakers.

Publicity. If you know where you could put a publicity poster please contact david.bender@btinternet.com

At present we have posters in the following places:

White Hill Centre, Chesham; Blue Diamond (formerly Van Hage) garden centre; Little Chalfont Library; Amersham Library; Chesham Library; Coleshill Village Hall; Tesco Amersham

Committee and Contact Details

President	Tim Hillier	president@amersham-gardening.org.uk
Vice-President	Susan Jeffery	
Chairman	Colin Ross	chairman@amersham-gardening.org.uk
Secretary	Jean Bowling	secretary@amersham-gardening.org.uk
Treasurer	David Bender	treasurer@amersham-gardening.org.uk
Visits Secretary	Liz Moulton	
Membership Sec	Annie Jardine	membership@amersham-gardening.org.uk
Talks Secretary	Julie Burton and Sue Edwards	speakersec@amersham-gardening.org.uk
Archivist	Carol Barratt	
Web Coordinator	David Bender	webmaster@amersham-gardening.org.uk
Committee Members	Frances Billington; Joan Clark; Carol Daw; Irene Glyn-Jones; Clive Symes; Anne Webb	
Newsletter Editor	David Bender	newsletter@amersham-gardening.org.uk

Past newsletters

There is an archive of past newsletters from May 2014 to the current issue on our website at <http://www.amersham-gardening.org.uk/newsletter.html>

Local events

If you know of local garden events, open gardens, etc, please email newsletter@amersham-gardening.org.uk to let us know as early as possible, so that information can go out in the newsletter and on the website.

Photos from outings

You can see links to lots of photos from our outings at <http://www.amersham-gardening.org.uk/outings.html>

Half price entry to RHS gardens

We are affiliated to the RHS, and one of the benefits is a card allowing two AGA members at a time to visit one of the RHS gardens at half price. If you want to borrow the card, please contact Jean Bowling (secretary@amersham-gardening.org.uk)